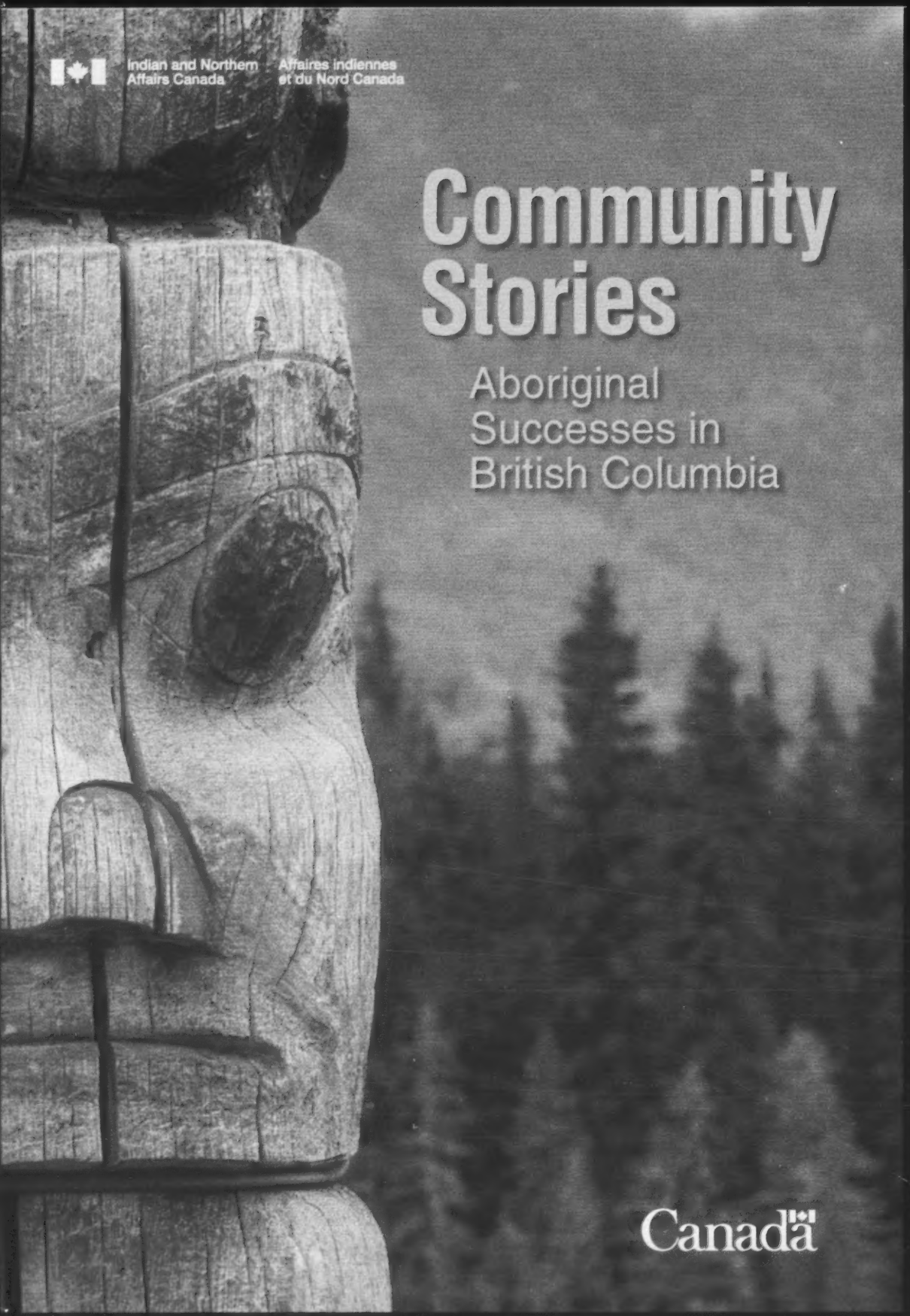

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada
Community Stories
Aboriginal Successes in British Columbia
Canada

Ahnee (Ojibwe)

Weytkp (Shuswap)

Yawć (Haisla)

Dännch'e (Athapascan)

Tanshi (Michif)

'Nit (Nisga'a)

Hello (English)

Yo (Kwakwala)

Wotziye (Dene)

Oki (Blackfoot)

Hin dahl willa win? (Gitxsan)

Aaniin (Inuktitut)

Tan kahk lu gil (Maliseet)

Tansi (Cree)

'Niit (Tsimshian)

Published under the authority of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians
Ottawa, 2009
www.ainc-inac.gc.ca
1-800-567-9604
TTY only 1-866-553-0554

QS-B051-000-BB-A1
Catalogue No. R3-114/2009E
ISBN 978-1-100-14512-9

© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada,
BC Region
600 – 1138 Melville Street
Vancouver, BC V6E 4S3

Email: InfoPubs@ainc-inac.gc.ca
Phone: 1-800-567-9604 (toll-free)
Fax: 1-866-817-3977
TTY: 1-866-553-0554 (toll-free)
Web site: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc

Contents

Introduction

2 Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia

5 National Aboriginal Day

6 Totem Pole Unites Metlakatla Community

Aboriginal Tourism

8 Aboriginal Tourism in British Columbia

10 Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre: A Triumph of Architecture and First Nations Culture

13 Osoyoos Indian Band Raises the Bar in Aboriginal Tourism

15 St. Eugene Mission Resort: Pride of the Kootenays

Growing Communities

18 The Sun Shines Brightly on T'Sou-ke First Nation

20 Moricetown Water Treatment Operators Tap into Clear Solution

23 Ucluelet Housing Development Provides Homes and More...

Opening the Door to the Future

26 Hesquiaht First Nation Place of Learning: Not Just a School

29 Students Thrive at Kitsumkalum Adult Learning Centre

31 BladeRunners Gives At-risk Youth a Second Chance

Modern Treaties

34 Reconciling the Past, Shaping the Future

Aboriginal Peoples in British Columbia

A Rich and Diverse Culture

Canada's vibrant identity is rooted in the culture and traditions of the Aboriginal peoples who have called this land home for thousands of years. Aboriginal peoples enrich Canada's cultural mosaic and are an integral part of this nation.

In Canada, "Aboriginal peoples" refers to the original peoples of North America and their descendants. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (commonly referred to as First Nations), Métis and Inuit—three distinct peoples with different histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Whether First Nations, Inuit or Métis, Aboriginal peoples live in urban, rural and remote communities across Canada. Most First Nations people live on lands called reserves, while nearly all Inuit live in northern and eastern communities in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Northern Quebec (Nunavik) and Labrador. The Métis, a diverse group of people with European and First Nations ancestry, live predominately in the western provinces.

In British Columbia (BC), there are 198 Indian Bands or First Nations, their culture as varied as the province's terrain. There are over 30 languages spoken by First Nations in BC. Language plays an important role in BC First Nations culture and identity.

BC First Nations have a deep and respectful connection to the land and sea. As first peoples of Canada, they learned how to live off the land and make the most of its many gifts.

To ensure a plentiful food supply, for example, the Athapaskan-speaking peoples of BC's northern interior were always on the move, especially during the long, cold winters. As a result, they built highly efficient, but quickly-constructed temporary homes.

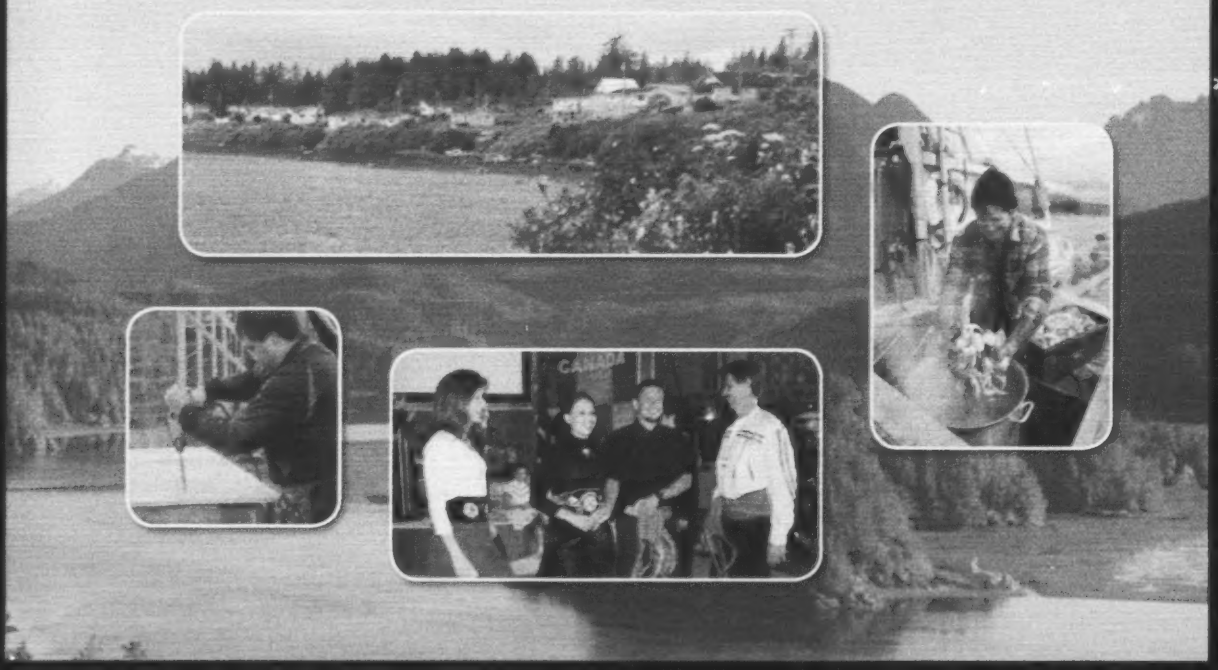
In contrast, the Pacific Coast's abundant sea life offered coastal First Nations a year-round food supply. They built large cedar homes called longhouses with plenty of room for extended families and they traveled by sea in wooden dugout canoes.

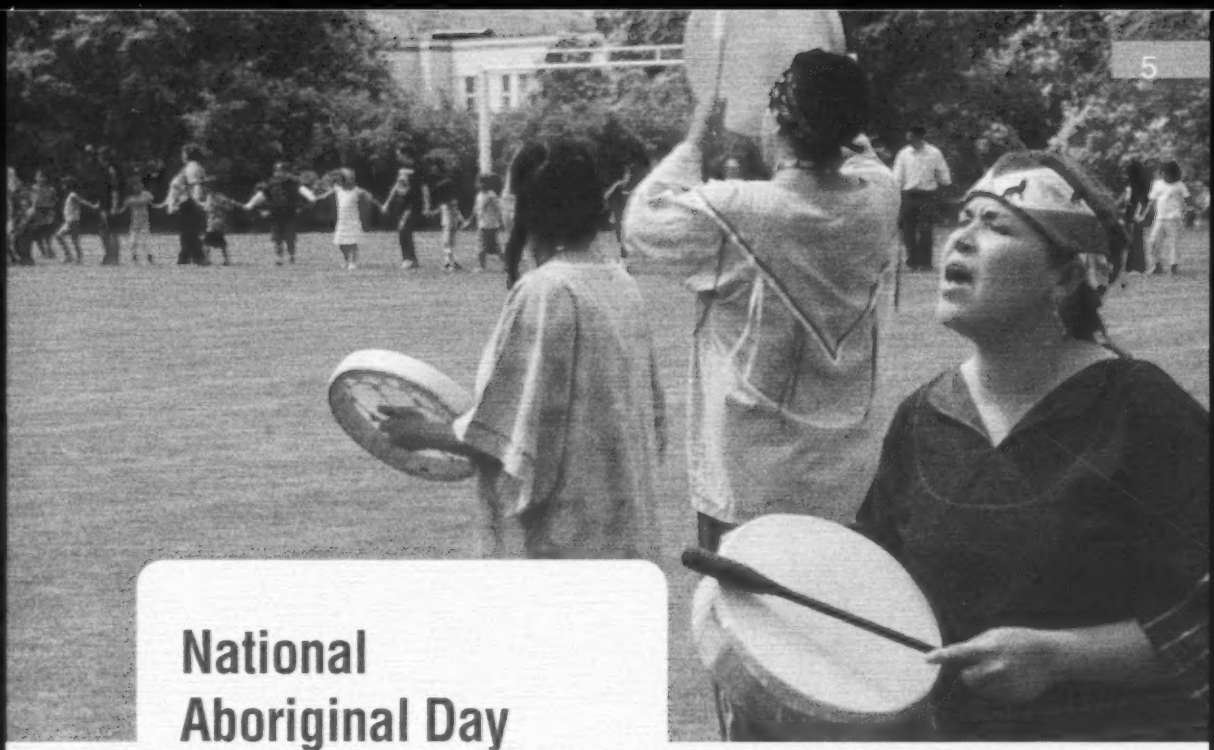
Today, the challenge for many of BC's First Nations is to ensure their distinct cultures survive in an ever-evolving Canada.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, on behalf of the Government of Canada, is working in partnership with BC First Nations to resolve outstanding claims of Aboriginal rights and title, while at the same time, making investments in Aboriginal communities to support education and improve housing and infrastructure.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is supporting BC First Nations in their efforts to improve social well-being and economic prosperity; develop healthier, more sustainable communities; and participate more fully in Canada's political, social and economic development.

The following pages provide a small window into the work Aboriginal people in BC have undertaken in partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Whether the focus is education, tourism, or governance, all of these projects have a common goal—improving the quality of life for Aboriginal peoples in BC.

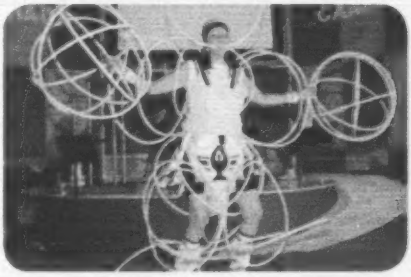




National Aboriginal Day

Each year on June 21st, all Canadians are invited to celebrate National Aboriginal Day—a time to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. June 21st was chosen as National Aboriginal Day because of the cultural significance of Summer Solstice—the first day of summer and longest day of the year. Traditionally, Aboriginal peoples have held festivals, feasts and ceremonies on the days surrounding Summer Solstice.

Across Canada, National Aboriginal Day events are organized both locally and regionally by Aboriginal peoples and other proud Canadians. Events and activities include traditional storytelling, singing, drumming and dancing, as well as arts and crafts displays. National Aboriginal Day is now part of the *Celebrate Canada!* festivities, which also include Saint Jean-Baptiste Day (June 24), Canadian Multiculturalism Day (June 27) and Canada Day (July 1).



Totem Pole Unites Metlakatla Community

In 2009, National Aboriginal Day in the Coast Tsimshian community of Metlakatla (pronounced Met-la-kat-la) marked the raising of the first totem pole by the First Nation in more than 160 years.

Hundreds of people from throughout the region travelled by boat to the small community to witness this truly historic event. The crowd watched as Chiefs and Elders in black and red regalia accompanied the totem pole on the journey to its final destination.

The 21-foot (over 6 metres) wooden totem pole now stands tall in front of Metlakatla's Band Office. Facing the Pacific Ocean, the totem pole watches over the many fishing boats that make their way through the tiny islands dotting the bay to catch local fish.

A striking and powerful presence, the pole depicts animals common to the west coast: the eagle, raven, wolf and killer whale. The figures represent four of the main crests of the nine tribes of the Coast Tsimshian people. Every family identifies with a particular crest, recalling the stories that have been orally passed down through the generations.

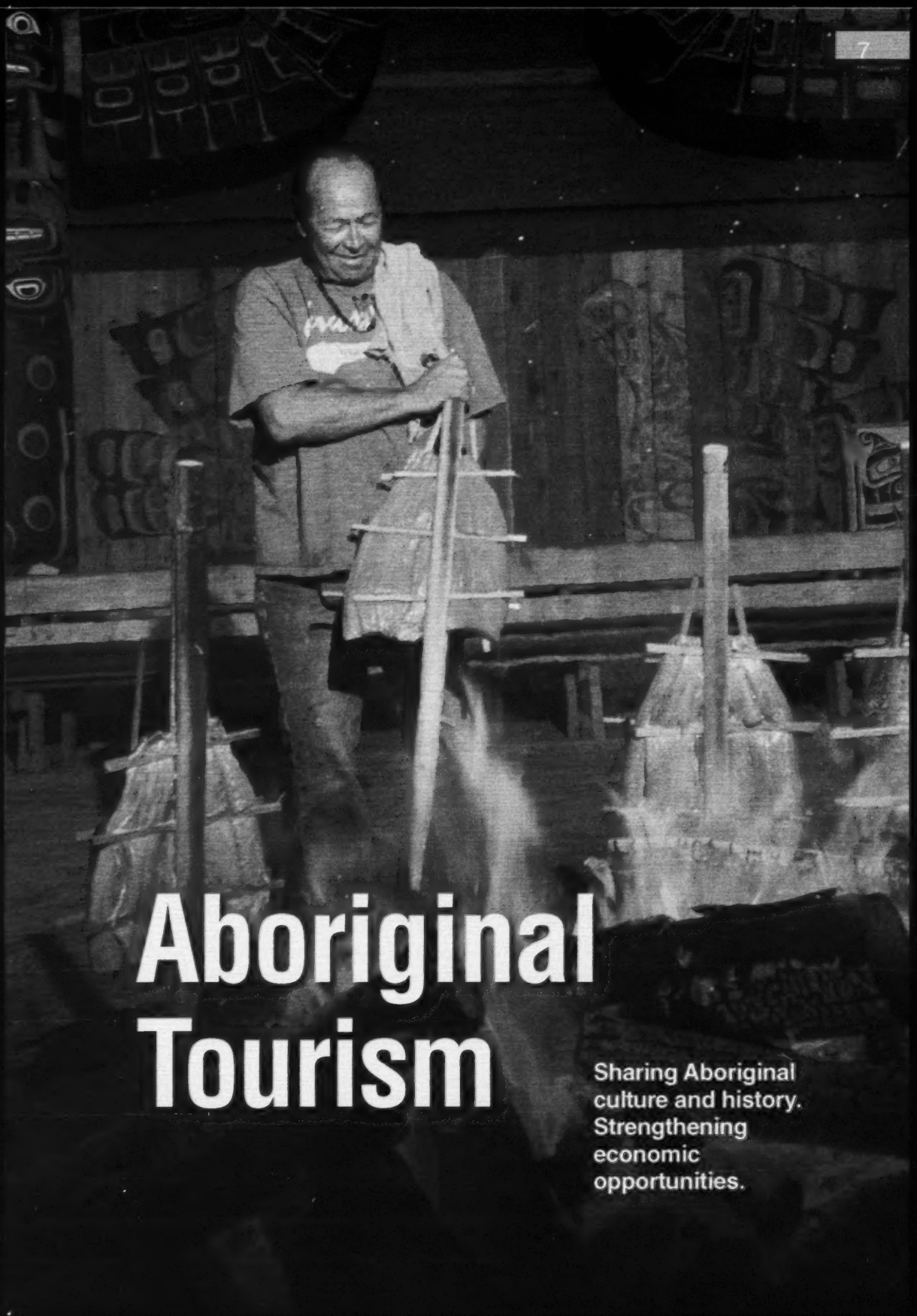
For the Coast Tsimshian people, the totem pole is a great source of pride, a visual representation of their identity: who they are, where they come from and where they're going.

For master carver, Mike Epp, carving the totem pole was an honour. A story teller using wood to communicate the traditional stories of his ancestors, Epp spent five months recreating a story once told to him by his uncle, an Hereditary Chief.

For the community, who have been without a pole for so long, it is a valuable symbol. Harold Leighton, Chief Councillor of Metlakatla, emphasized, "This is a community pole. It brings us all together and from here on in we will move forward."

▲ Hereditary Chiefs stand before new totem pole

Totem Pole – *An Aboriginal art form unique to the Northwest Coast of BC, totem poles are three-dimensional sculptures carved out of western red cedar, a wood that is desirable for its fragrance, ease of carving, and resistance to decay. The poles' meanings are varied, some recounting legends, clan lineages, or historic events.*



Aboriginal Tourism

Sharing Aboriginal culture and history. Strengthening economic opportunities.

Aboriginal Tourism in British Columbia

Welcoming Visitors, Preserving Culture, Growing Businesses

From the arid climate of Osoyoos in the south central part of British Columbia, to the misty shores of Kitimat on the central coast, the landscape of the province is full of exhilarating and unique Aboriginal tourism destinations.

In keeping with centuries-old traditions of hospitality, the Aboriginal peoples of BC welcome thousands of visitors to their communities each year. Whether it's feasting on traditional foods, attending cultural performances or taking guided adventure tours through BC's abundant wild spaces, Aboriginal tourism offers visitors authentic cultural experiences that provide insight into Aboriginal traditions and values.

Currently, about 200 Aboriginal tourism businesses operate in BC. This growing industry has created new economic opportunities for BC First Nations, while providing visitors with rare opportunities to experience BC's diverse Aboriginal cultures first-hand. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is proud to support the Aboriginal Tourism Association of BC in their efforts to help grow a sustainable, culturally rich Aboriginal tourism industry.

The following stories offer a glimpse into this important BC industry.

To learn more about Aboriginal tourism in BC visit: www.aboriginalbc.com.

...at the Xats'ull Heritage Village near Williams Lake, guests can overnight in a reconstructed pit house or teepee, take an Aboriginal storytelling workshop and then experience an authentic sweat lodge. www.xatsull.ca

...in Prince Rupert, tourists can view ancient petroglyphs, photograph whales or venture into one of the world's most noteworthy grizzly bear sanctuaries, the Khutzeymateen Inlet Conservancy. www.seashorecharters.com

...at Little Shuswap Lake, near Chase, visitors can lounge lakeside, take in nine holes at an 18-hole championship golf course and sample mouth-watering First Nations-inspired cuisine. www.talkingrock.ca

...in North Vancouver, tourists can learn about Coast Salish culture first-hand, through traditional ocean-going canoe and kayak excursions on Burrard Inlet. www.takayatours.com

Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre: A Triumph of Architecture and First Nations Culture

When the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre was being built in the heart of Whistler's upper village in 2007, a black bear and her cub ambled through the front entrance and had a good look around. Their presence was cause not for panic, but for celebration. After all, to the mostly Squamish and Lil'wat people on-site that day, these shaggy, sharp-clawed creatures were a blessing, signifying power and good luck.

Whether the presence of this bear family brought good luck or not, there's no question that the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, which opened for business in 2008, is a success on many levels.

AN ARCHITECTURAL VISION

This modern interpretation of a traditional Squamish longhouse and Lil'wat Istken (underground dwelling) is impressive, with walls of shimmering glass and a large cedar deck surrounding the building. The dramatic snow-capped mountains beyond—a traditional

Evening event at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre

▲ Legends and artifacts in the "What we Treasure" museum at the Centre

gathering and spiritual place for both Nations—provides a fitting backdrop.

Boulders painted with colourful pictographs grace the walkways along the approach to beautiful cedar entrance doors, which, aptly enough, feature an image of a bear carved by well-known local Lil'wat Nation artisans.

Inside, giant Douglas fir beams anchor the seven-metre-high Great Hall where you will find a wealth of Aboriginal artifacts from the Squamish and Lil'wat people. Massive hand-carved replica spindle whorls (an essential tool in traditional weaving) revolve overhead. A Salish hunting canoe carved from a single cedar tree is suspended from the ceiling, while hand woven blankets by Squamish Nation weavers hang on the walls alongside intricately woven cedar mats in patterns unique to Lil'wat weavers. In the gallery upstairs, carved masks and other artifacts and tools are displayed for visitors.

BRIDGING PAST TO FUTURE

Visitors to the Cultural Centre are impressed with the building itself, but the rave reviews are directed at the team of energetic and enthusiastic First Nations youth who conduct the guided tours and workshops, where visitors can learn the ancient arts of beading and weaving or a little of the Lil'wat and Squamish Nation traditional languages.

Lil'wat Nation Chief Leonard Andrew and Squamish Nation Chief Gibby Jacob believed it was important that the Centre provide visitors an authentic First Nations cultural experience. They also wanted a new generation of First Nations youth to reconnect to their past. "The circle is closing. Our circle was broken at one point in time," said Chief Gibby Jacob. "Our ability to do the good things that we need to do for our children...is coming about again."

Many of the young people at the Cultural Centre are graduates of the Aboriginal Youth Ambassador program. The program, begun in 2001 by the Squamish Nation was set up to provide British Columbia's Aboriginal youth with a strong sense of connection to their land and culture, while providing business experience and tourism training.

▲ Shawnna Apodaca greets guests at the main entrance to the Centre

For Lil'wat ambassador Holly Joseph, her work at the Cultural Centre is an opportunity to share the many stories she learned as a child while berry picking with her mom. "Out of 10 children, only two of us remember the stories," she said. "Now, in honor of my mom and the generations before her, I'm sharing those stories with visitors from all over the world. In a very real way, it keeps our ancestors alive."

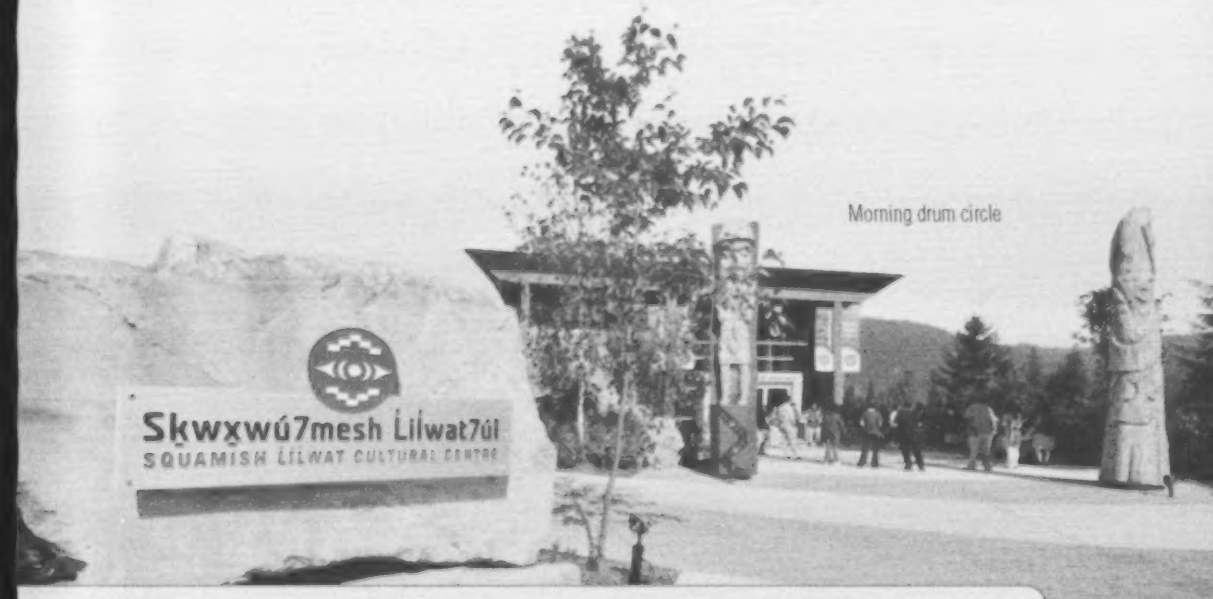
Roxy Lewis of the Squamish Nation, an ambassador since 2004, said she's learned a lot about both her own and the Lil'wat culture. She believes the Cultural Centre reflects just how far First Nations have come in the past 50 years. "At one time our people weren't allowed to speak our own language. Now, people actually want to learn about our language and culture."

▲ Learning how to make a medicine bag

What better place to learn about them than here in this spectacular setting – the result of a committed partnership, inspired vision and, just maybe, the blessing of a mother bear and her cub.

For more on the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, visit their Web site: www.slcc.ca

The photos in this story are provided by Gary Fiegehen and the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre



Morning drum circle

Medicine Bag – *A medicine bag is a traditional pouch that holds various items of supernatural power and has special powers of its own. These bags are used for protection and are often very personal.*

Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa

Osoyoos Indian Band Raises the Bar in Aboriginal Tourism

The beautiful southern Okanagan Valley in British Columbia has long been famous for its golf courses, ski resorts, orchards and vineyards – the hot, dry summers and mild winters make for a perfect year-round destination. Perched in the hills above the town of Osoyoos, the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa only adds to the area's allure. As one of the original First Nations luxury resorts in Canada, it has garnered international attention. The sprawling resort includes a hotel, golf course, RV park, full-service spa, cultural centre, conference centre, vineyard and award-winning winery.

North America's first Aboriginal owned and operated winery, Nk'Mip Cellars (pronounced In-ka-MEEP) has received more than 50 international wine awards since opening its doors in 2002. The winery harvests grapes from some of the oldest vines in the region, just one of the reasons the wines keep winning awards.

PRIDE IN CULTURE, HISTORY

The fertile Okanagan Valley is steeped in history and culture. Through hands-on displays, tours, self-guided trails and interpretive sites, the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre celebrates the culture and history of the local Okanagan-area First Nations who have lived on this land for centuries.

One of Canada's three most endangered eco-systems, the area is home to hundreds of rare plant and animal species and the Cultural Centre celebrates that rich heritage and the connection to the land enjoyed by the Okanagan First Nations.

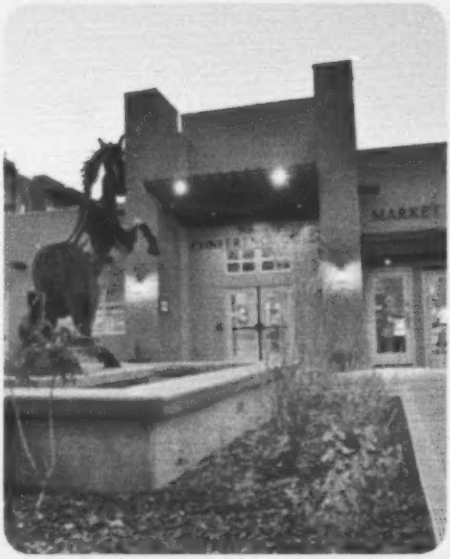
FULL STEAM AHEAD

The state-of-the-art Business Conference Centre is the latest addition to the resort. "The site is unique. It's rare to have a cultural centre or a conference centre on-reserve that has all the amenities," said Osoyoos Indian Band Chief Clarence Louie.

The Conference Centre's first event in 2009 was a big one—a First Nations economic development forum called ***Building a Better Canada through First Nations Economies***. Chief Louie brought together more than 300 chiefs and corporate leaders from Canada and Washington State to discuss ways to stimulate the First Nations economy, using Nk'Mip as an example.

None of it has been easy. Chief Louie's vision of self reliance for his people has taken drive, perseverance and plain old hard work. Now with more jobs on-reserve than members, the Osoyoos Indian Band is employing people from surrounding areas to fill the demand. Through strong leadership and strategic partnerships, the 450-member Osoyoos Indian Band has created a tourism business generating annual revenues in excess of $40 million and employing 1,200 people.

▲ Nk'Mip Cellars wine shop



▲ Business Conference Centre

The Band operates ten businesses in total, including the resort. It also administers its own health, social, education, and municipal services. Is it any wonder the Band has won numerous environmental, architectural, and business awards for innovation. And there's no sign of slowing down any time soon. When asked what the future holds for the Band, Chief Louie doesn't hold back. "We're not going to stop improving employment opportunities or creating our own economic possibilities."

So, if you're looking for a place to raise your glass—there are plenty of reasons to celebrate at the Spirit Ridge Vineyard Resort & Spa in Osoyoos.

For more information, visit their Web site: www.spiritridge.ca

St. Eugene Mission Resort

St. Eugene Mission Resort: Pride of the Kootenays

Nestled up against the Rocky Mountains in the East Kootenay region of southeastern British Columbia, the St. Eugene Mission Resort is a rare jewel. A major tourism attraction, the resort is surrounded by the stunning natural beauty of the area and is also a cornerstone of economic and personal success for the Ktunaxa Nation (pronounced "k-too-nah-ha").

The original St. Eugene Mission was a grand turn-of-the-century stone building steeped in local history. In 1912, the Mission was converted to a residential school, where until 1970, 5000 local First Nations children passed through the Mission's doors to attend classes.

A NEW CHAPTER

Since its days as a residential school, the old Mission has come a long way. And so has the Ktunaxa Nation, who recognized in its worn rafters a unique economic opportunity – and a way to heal.

The building had been empty for almost 30 years and many band members wanted to see it torn down. "We needed a way to turn a negative into a positive," said former St. Mary's Indian Band Chief Sophie Pierre. A similar sentiment was voiced by late Band Elder Mary Paul: "Since it was within the St. Eugene Mission School that the culture of the Kootenay Indian was taken away, it should be within the building that it is returned." Today, her words are etched on a plaque that hangs in the hotel entrance, a powerful reminder of the history contained within its walls.

A CULTURE RETURNED

"The benefits of the project have been tremendous," said Helder Ponte, Ktunaxa Director of Economic Development and

Under the leadership of former St. Mary's Indian Band Chief Sophie Pierre, and the Ktunaxa Kinbasket Tribal Council, it took 10 years of hard work and $40 million to transform the former St. Eugene Mission residential school into an upscale international resort. The result is impressive: a top-notch resort with 125 rooms, a casino, four restaurants, meeting rooms, a recreation centre and an adjoining 18-hole championship golf course. During a second phase of development, the Ktunaxa Nation added an Interpretive Centre.

Investment. "Not only is St. Eugene a source of great pride for community members, but owning such a major asset contributes significantly to the economic viability of the community."

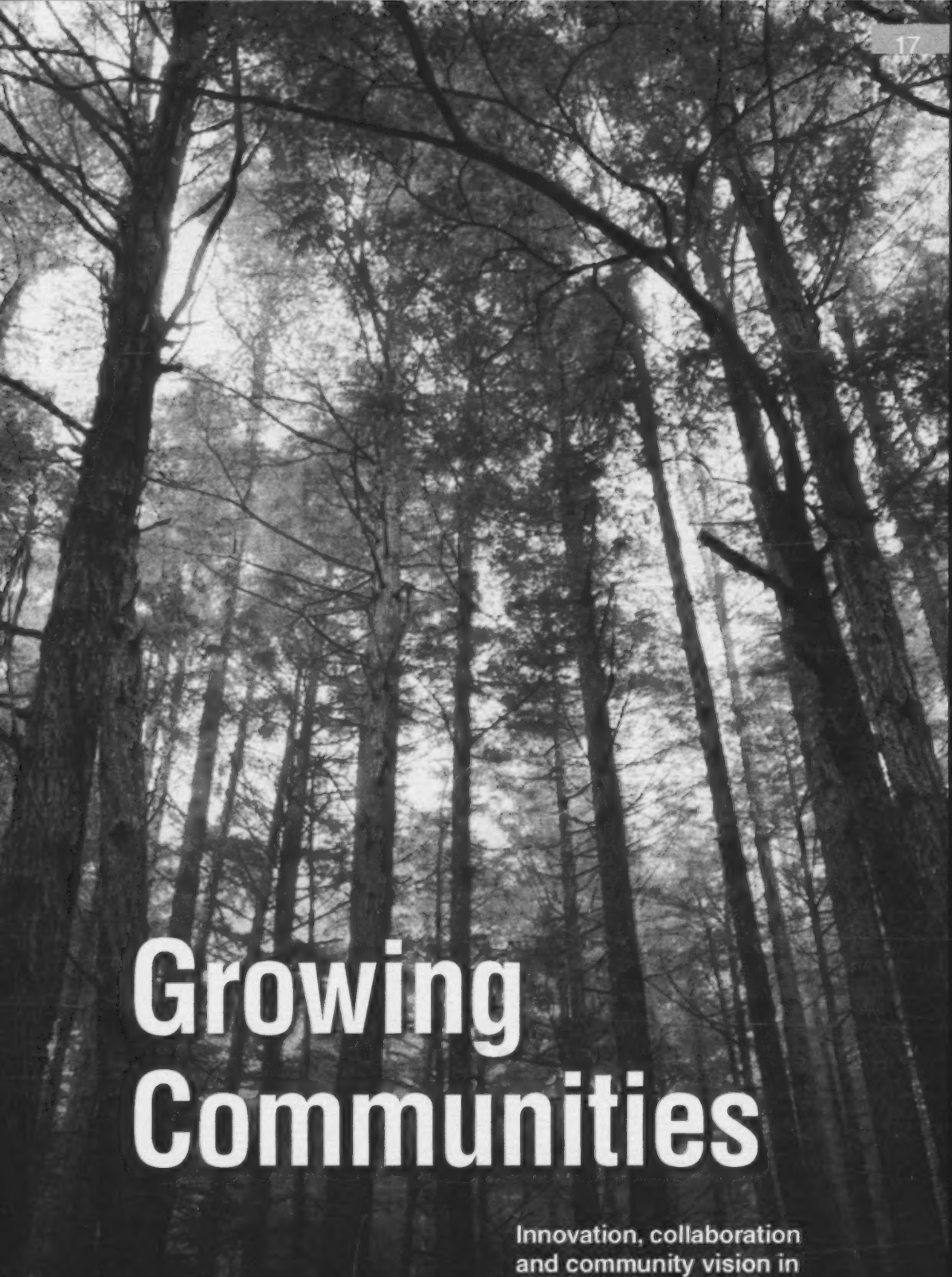
Recognizing the project's potential to improve the quality of life for the Ktunaxa Nation and maximize their participation in the Canadian economy, the Government of Canada invested $3 million. It was an investment well worth the returns, which are benefiting the surrounding communities as well as the Ktunaxa Nation.

"St. Eugene is a major attraction and we are the third largest employer in the region," Ponte points out. The Resort employs 200 staff year-round, swelling to almost 300 during the busy summer months. Almost a quarter of the St. Eugene employees are Aboriginal, for whom the Resort provides both jobs and training opportunities. "Individuals who start at the entry level often move into management roles once they have a chance to develop their skills," said Ponte.

In 2004, Ktunaxa partnered with neighbouring Samson Cree Nation in Alberta and the Mnjikaning First Nation (pronounced "Mu-jig-a-nee") in Rama, Ontario. By combining forces with other First Nations, Ktunaxa was able to build on its success and grow in new directions. "It has been very satisfying to have three First Nations come together and work towards a common goal," said Ponte.

In addition to the economic and employment benefits, the Resort provides a venue for sharing the rich Ktunaxa culture. Visitors to the new Interpretive Centre can view contemporary Aboriginal art, listen as Elders share local legends and history in the teepees, and enjoy traditional foods in the hotel restaurant. When asked what makes this resort special Pierre said: "We live in a beautiful place, but the world is full of beautiful places. What makes us unique is the Ktunaxa language and culture."

For more information, visit the St. Eugene's Mission Resort's Web site at: www.steugene.ca, or call: 250-420-2000.



Growing Communities

Innovation, collaboration and community vision in

The Sun Shines Brightly on T'Sou-ke First Nation

In a small First Nations community on Vancouver Island, energy meters are spinning backwards. As the sun beats down on the new solar panel installation that the T'Sou-ke First Nation built, so much clean energy is being produced that there's enough to power the entire community and sell a surplus back to BC Hydro.

Two years ago, the community of T'Sou-ke (pronounced Sow-k) embarked on a visioning process they called *Visions in Progress*. They wanted to start the journey towards creating a sustainable community together, and found that comprehensive community planning* was a way to guide them as they took steps towards achieving their goal.

According to Andrew Moore, a planner and facilitator for T'Sou-ke First Nation, it was critically important that the whole community be engaged in the visioning. "A collective vision is a picture in which everyone can see themselves," Moore said. Every community member provided input into the plan, and the community continues to drive the project, achieving remarkable success in a short time.

MOTHER NATURE'S GIFTS

"We've always wanted to look after our land and our people in a way that's gentle to mother earth," said Linda Bristol, a T'Sou-ke Elder. After a year of intense planning and community engagement, T'Sou-ke developed a five-year plan designed to end the community's

*Comprehensive Community Planning – *Comprehensive Community Planning is long-term, community-based planning by First Nations for First Nations. It is a priority for many First Nations who see it as an effective tool for building healthy and sustainable communities for their members. For more information, visit the INAC web site: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc*

dependence on fossil fuels. Ambitious and unconventional, the plan is based on the use of solar and wind power. Its first phase is the T'Sou-ke Solar Community Program, Sum-SHA-Thut, meaning sunshine in the Coast Salish language, Sencoten.

As part of the program, solar hot water panels were installed on all members' houses, a 75kW photovoltaic (PV) installation was erected—the largest PV installation in BC—and T'Sou-ke members received training on solar technology and panel installation. The community will also be looking at conservation. "It's much cheaper to save energy than to produce it," said Moore.

T'Sou-ke First Nation Chief Gordon Planes believes that climate change and rising energy costs are a wake up call—and that the time to act is now. "We asked ourselves what can we do as First Nations people and Canadians living in British Columbia? What can we do to spark people's ideas, to say 'hey, we should all do something about this?' We need to do something," said Chief Planes.

THE TRADITION OF SHARING

According to Chief Planes, the project provides a true opportunity for learning. "If we can network and share, we can get a lot of really good things done," he said. With this in mind, the solar project was built as a demonstration project for others to see.

Recently, T'Sou-ke hosted a solar gathering in their community, inviting other First Nations to tour the solar installation and hear about T'Sou-ke's experiences. Most of the First Nations people who attended the solar gathering are off-grid, living in remote communities that rely on diesel fuel.

▲ Students at Edward Milne Community School in T'Sou-ke show their art, depicting Sun-SHA-Thut

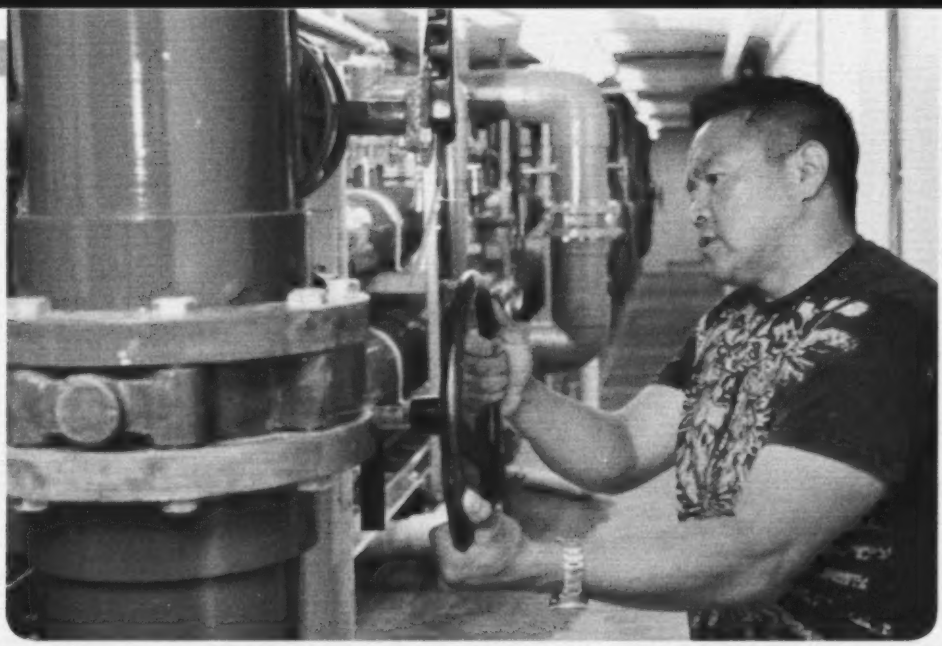
◀ Chief Gordon Planes with solar panel installation

Consistent with the Aboriginal tradition of potlatch, a ceremony where wealth is redistributed and gifts are given, T'Sou-ke is giving away the information they have gained to anyone who is interested. "That's who we are as First Nations people. We don't own anything. The more you share, the wealthier you are," said Elder Bristol.

Chief Planes believes all of us need to more effectively use the gifts we take for granted on a daily basis. "We want to show how sustainability can be achieved, using the power of the sun, wind and sea," he said.

The T'Sou-ke First Nation has taken a step, one of many, towards realizing their goal of sustainability. But they're not stopping at that. The community has already identified their next step: to explore the use of wind energy and harness the high winds coming off of the Straight of Juan de Fuca.

"This is the beginning. The beginning for all of us," remarked Chief Planes. "We're all jumping into the same canoe and paddling together."



Moricetown Water Treatment Operators Tap into Clear Solution

Having safe drinking water is something many of us take for granted. But for the water treatment operators in Moricetown, a small First Nations community in northwestern British Columbia, ensuring good water quality is a full-time job. It's a weighty responsibility and one that an upgraded water treatment plant has made that much easier to manage.

Six years ago, Moricetown was under a boil-water advisory. The water treatment plant at the time didn't have the capacity to supply the entire community with drinking water and couldn't reliably remove harmful bacteria. The community did frequent water quality tests, but these had to be shipped to nearby Prince Rupert for analysis and it took weeks to get the results. What's more, the glacier-fed creek that provides the community's water is laden with 'glacial dust', a substance the old treatment plant couldn't remove.

With the community growing at a steady pace and the water supply vulnerable, it was clear something needed to be done. "An upgrade to the Moricetown water-treatment plant was needed to meet the standards for more stringent water quality and to keep up with the growth in the community," said Danny Higashitani, Water Engineer for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY

The Moricetown Band recognized the need for action, but they weren't quite sure what form it should take. A consultant suggested they upgrade the rapid-filtration treatment method to a slow sand system. They followed that advice and haven't looked back since.

The Moricetown slow sand treatment plant is the first to be built on-reserve, but it likely won't be the last. More and more communities are realizing the benefits of the slow sand method, including the World Health Organization, which has stated that "slow sand filtration may be the most efficient method of water treatment. It is far more efficient than rapid filtration in removing bacterial contamination." In fact, the Moricetown plant can provide more clean water than the community currently needs.

Water treatment operators Floyd Naziel and Clayton Michell monitor the plant on-site and remotely 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to ensure the water meets the standards outlined in the *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality*. An operator since 1995, Michell says that being in charge of the water treatment plant is serious work. "Water operators have to be reliable. It's not just about water; it's about the health and safety of the whole community," Michell said.

Cecil Alfred, a retired water operator from the old plant is proud of the new building. "The water it's producing is excellent," he said. And he's proud of the

▲ Clayton Michell inspecting water quality tests
◀ Floyd Naziel at the water treatment plant

water operators, who work tirelessly to make sure that quality is maintained.

"I didn't imagine I'd become a water treatment operator," said Naziel, who was certified in 2002. He was helping build the new plant when he was handpicked by the soon-to-retire Alfred. "I watched the way Floyd worked and tested him to see if he had what it takes," said Alfred. "I'm confident leaving the plant in Floyd and Clayton's hands."

LIFE-LONG LEARNING AND SUPPORT

Naziel and Michell are currently enrolled in the Water Treatment Technology program at Thompson Rivers University, a unique program designed to be flexible and innovative. Both operators enjoy the flexibility of doing a combination of distance learning and week-long on-site practicums in Kamloops.

Outside of the classroom, Naziel and Michell get all the support they need to carry out their work while continuing with their certification. The Circuit Rider Program, provided through Indian and

Northern Affairs Canada, offers newer operators ongoing training and mentorship by highly experienced and certified operators. Circuit Riders work directly with operators through on-site visits, providing advice on how to streamline and properly maintain their operations. "I know if I have any questions or if we have problems, I can call our Circuit Rider," said Michell.

When asked what the new treatment plant has done for the community, Michell said one thing is clear: it has helped the community "respect our water and appreciate it."

▲ Clayton Michell inspecting the creek water intake

The Government of Canada is investing in projects that will provide lasting, sustainable benefits for First Nation communities and is taking decisive action to improve water conditions through the First Nations Water and Wastewater Action Plan. Since 2006, the Government of Canada has worked with First Nations and other partners to reduce the number of high-risk water systems in British Columbia First Nation communities by almost 69 per cent. In spring 2006, 64 First Nations in BC had high-risk water systems. As of March 31, 2009, that number has been reduced to 20. For more information on the First Nations Water and Wastewater Action Plan, go to: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/mr/nr/j-a2008/2-3019-eng.asp

Violet Mundy and the new Ucluelet six-plex

Ucluelet Housing Development Provides Homes and More...

When the Ucluelet First Nation (pronounced You-CLUE-let) decided to move ahead with a new housing development on their reserve at Itattsoo, on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, they knew they were creating more than just a structure. They were providing homes, creating jobs and attracting members back to the community.

"Our population has stayed the same over the years so we haven't had any new housing units built in over 18 years," explained Violet Mundy, Chief Councillor for the Ucluelet First Nation. "But now, we're starting to see a younger generation wanting to come back to the reserve. We needed new housing, but it had to be done right."

To meet the demand, in January 2006 the Ucluelet First Nation began an extensive process of community consultation and planning. "The needs of our members, including those wanting to move back to the community, greatly influenced the designs of the units," Mundy explained. The First Nation also wanted to try something unique for larger extended families, so the project included a six-plex with a traditional central common area, which today doubles as a meeting facility.

NEW JOBS, NEW HOMES

The community's desire for sustainable housing drove the design process. "We wanted quality homes, and we wanted them to last," Mundy said. So builders used LOGIX Insulated Concrete Forms

(ICF), a construction method that is energy efficient, durable and perfect for mould prevention in the wet West Coast climate.

The Government of Canada helped fund the project. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provided more than $500,000, while additional funds came from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Ucluelet First Nation. The Nuu-chah-nulth Economic Development Corporation also contributed money for training band members in ICF building practices.

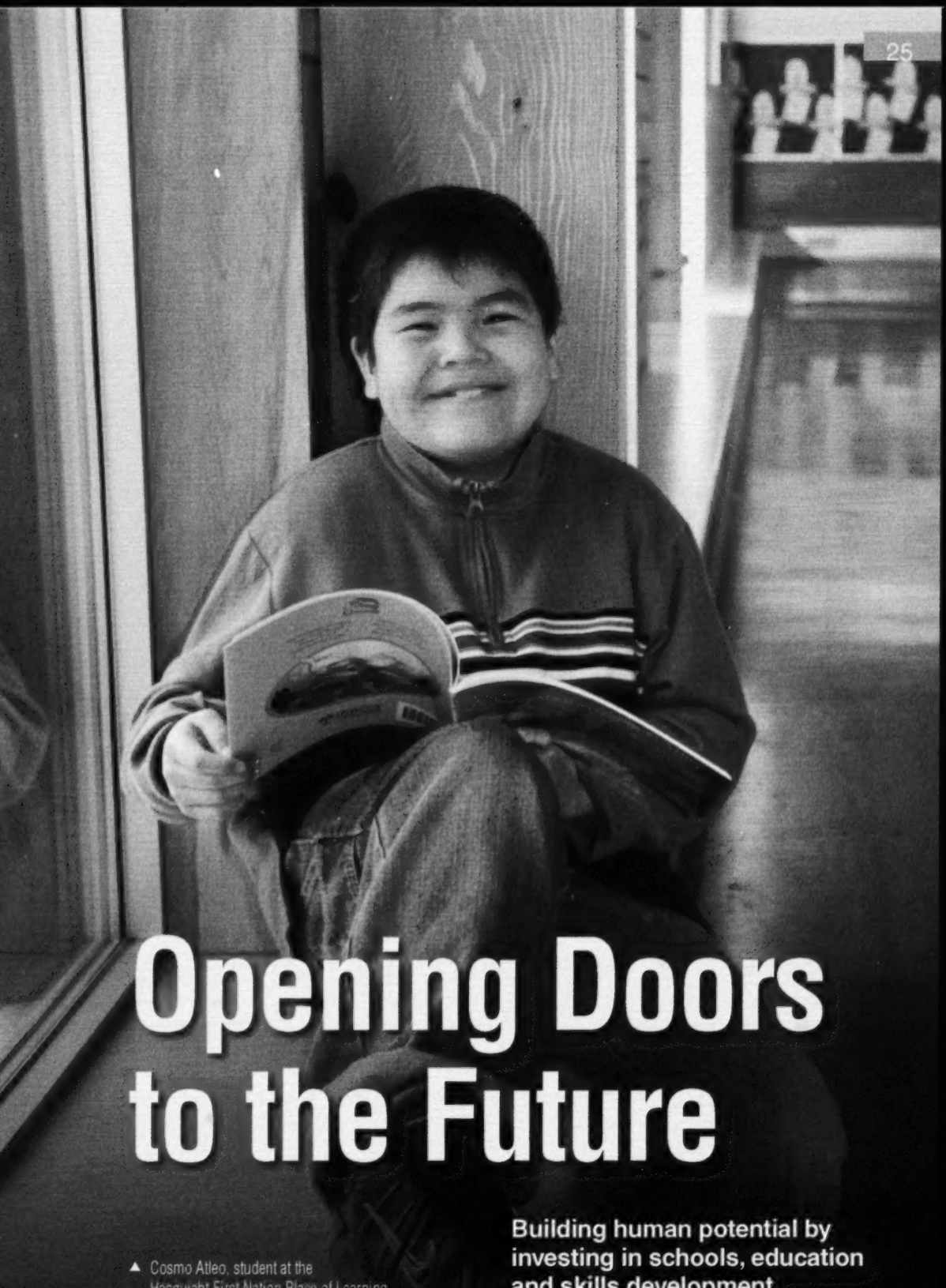
The community created jobs and at the same time lowered costs by drawing on their newly trained labour pool. "We've had problems attracting labour to Ucluelet," Mundy said, "But by having our own contractors involved from start to finish, they were taught a skill and how to run a business."

Not long after the development's 24 units were completed in October 2008, the Ucluelet First Nation was recognized for their initiative and creativity with a CMHC Housing Award. When asked how the project has impacted the community, Mundy was not short on answers. "I believe that our members are proud of what has been accomplished," she said, "and they have pride in the homes that we had a part in designing and building, in the skills developed – we have a sense of well being from actually completing a project that was on time and on budget."

UCLUELET FIRST NATION HOUSING QUICK FACTS

- Recycled materials and local labour lowered the building costs from $200+ per square foot to $156.87 per square foot.
- The Insulated Concrete Form (ICF) walls used in the development have several advantages:
  - High energy efficiency (lower utility costs);
  - Durability (expected service life of 100+ years);
  - Increased comfort (consistent temperature);
  - Strength (8.5 times stronger than wood-framed buildings); and,
  - Prevents mould and eliminates rot.
- The new homes' radiant-floor heating, low-flow toilets and solar panels increase energy efficiency and lower costs.
- The specially designed landscapes minimize storm-water runoff, which can pollute local waterways.

Ucluelet development



Opening Doors to the Future

Building human potential by investing in schools, education and skills development

▲ Cosmo Atleo, student at the

Hesquiaht First Nation Place of Learning

Hesquiaht First Nation Place of Learning: Not Just a School

The new Hesquiaht First Nation Place of Learning isn't just a school. It's a community centre, a post-disaster facility and most of all, something that community members built with their own hands, reflecting their own vision, using natural resources from their own traditional territory.

Through well-attended meetings, the community was instrumental in the design and construction of the school. In fact, more than half of Hesquiaht's members helped with its construction. "We wanted to build the school we wanted, not have one given to us," said Cecil Sabbas, Band Administrator and Project Coordinator. "The process was exciting for us all."

Exciting. And challenging too. With no road access to Hesquiaht on Vancouver Island, supplies had to be brought in by barge or floatplane. But then this tiny, remote community tucked into the inlet by Hot Springs Cove, is used to overcoming hardship. In 1964, a devastating tidal wave destroyed the community, forcing its members to disperse to Port Alberni and Victoria. Starting from scratch, the community has rebuilt and those who remain are proud to call this place by the sea home.

SETTING A GREEN EXAMPLE

"A lot of thought went into it," said Sabbas, when asked about the school's design and the extra consideration paid to respecting the land and harnessing its natural resources. Community members collected logs after a storm and these provided the building's support beams. The cedar throughout came from the traditional territory, milled by volunteers on a saw purchased by the community as an investment towards self-sufficiency.

Other "green" features include the use of solar-heated rainwater to power a geothermal heating system and the harnessing of wind power for natural air ventilation. "We wanted it to be simple and low maintenance. We're trying to do our part – as small as we are, as isolated as we are. We try to set a soft footprint on the environment," explained Sabbas.

Hereditary Chief Dominic Andrews, one of the school's biggest advocates, donated a totem pole, which now stands watch over the Story Pit, where the kids hold performances and gather for storytelling. "The Big Chief has a very strong presence in this school," Sabbas regularly tells visitors.

BY THE COMMUNITY FOR THE COMMUNITY

Having recently moved to Hesquiaht from Victoria, Rebecca Atleo, Principal of the school says one of the first things she noticed about her new home was its good community feeling and how the school has contributed to that sense of unity. "This school is a positive for the community," she said. "It's the best way to get the message out there – that we can do this, we can strive, we can accomplish anything."

Part of Principal Atleo's approach to education comes from her grandmother, who said, "The best time to teach a child is when they're eating. They are swallowing the knowledge." Now, the school's gymnasium is a place to gather, feast and learn. The community is looking forward to hosting their first potlatch there very soon.

The Hesquiaht First Nation's school project had the support of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, which provided funding of $7.5 million under its Education Capital Program and provided guidance along the way. And the Province of BC recently donated 12 computers, satellite dishes and internet access. "Government was a partner in our success," Sabbas added.

▲ The Story Pit and totem pole donated by Hereditary Chief Andrews

The future is a little brighter for the Hesquiaht community. Plans are in the works for a graduation ceremony for all Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations students to be held in the new gymnasium. And Atleo is hoping that other First Nations will see what Hesquiaht has done and be inspired to start positive community projects of their own.

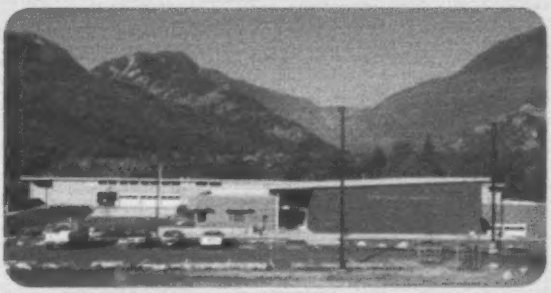
▲ Principal Atleo with students

Investing in First Nations Education

Located outside of Lytton, BC, two and a half hours east of Vancouver, the new Stein Valley Nlakapamux School (pronounced Ing-Khla-kap-muh) opened its doors in September 2009. The new school has over 270 students from Kindergarten to Grade 12, and teaches conventional subjects like Math, English and Science alongside the local Nlakapamux (also spelled Nlha.kAPmhh) language and First Nations studies.

The new school is a wonderful example of what hard work and partnerships can achieve. Local First Nations worked hand-in-hand with a volunteer school board and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to make the vision of a new school a reality.

In an ongoing commitment to providing high quality education, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has helped build ten schools on-reserve in BC since 2004. The department also funds 119 First Nations schools in BC.



▲ A view of the school and the Stein Valley

▼ Classrooms are all labelled in Nlakapamux and English.

▼ Colleen Austin and class of 2009

Students Thrive at Kitsumkalum Adult Learning Centre

Heading west from the City of Terrace, British Columbia, the majestic Skeena River on the left, travelers will come across the small First Nations community of Kitsumkalum (pronounced Kits-um-kay-lum). Known as the People of the Robin, the Kitsumkalum peoples follow the time-honoured tradition of passing cultural traditions, property and status to their children through the mother's side of the family. There's no question women play a central role in Kitsumkalum society, linking each generation to the past.

For some women, like Charlotte Guno, Principal of the 'Na aksa Gila Kyew Learning Centre and Education Coordinator for the Kitsumkalum First Nation, keeping her culture and her community connected is more than a personal priority– it's one of the main reasons she started the 'Na aksa Gila Kyew Learning Centre (pronounced "Ena-axa-Gila-Geeo"), Kitsumkalum's adult education program.

On the surface, the Learning Centre is like any other adult education program, offering courses in English, Science and Math so that students can build a foundation for future study. What sets it apart is its emphasis on teaching in a culturally relevant way.

A CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Here at the 'Na aksa Gila Kyew Learning Centre, students study their local language, Sm'algyax, (pronounced "Sim-al-gee-ak")

and learn about traditional foods in a nutrition class. The Centre has even produced a video for an intercultural exchange with an indigenous group in Bolivia. These seemingly small shifts in approach have made a big difference to students here, who benefit from an education that is culturally respectful and relevant to their lives.

Head instructor Colleen Austin is the driving force behind many of the school's unique programs and teaching methods. With a background in Aboriginal education, Austin knows that students learn best when they feel supported. So she pays attention to the needs of each and every student. "All of our students have a bad story about high school," explained Austin. "My job is to change the perception they have about their own education." Working closely with a small group of students means Austin can go beyond the conventional role of a teacher. Whether that means lending an ear or hand-stitching a family's crest onto a graduation gown, Austin will go beyond the call of duty to help her students succeed.

EDUCATION IS FREEDOM

Guno and Austin see the potential in every student who walks through the Learning Centre's doors. Some, like Annie Bolton, were reluctant to return to school but have since become educational role models in the Kitsumkalum community. Bolton was a busy mother, wife and community volunteer without the time or energy to attend classes. But her dream of one day going to college and her drive to succeed won out. The Learning Centre provided a welcoming and supportive environment for Bolton and she thrived there, inspiring others to reconsider their education goals, including two of her children, Kevin and Jenniefer.

It took determination and dedication, but this spring the family members graduated together at a heart-warming ceremony witnessed by family and friends.

Guno beams as she talks about her students. Two 2009 graduates plan to attend university, while several others will go on to train at the local college or trade schools.

Ultimately, Guno's goal is to develop each student's lifelong learning potential. She teaches them to believe in themselves and stresses that making the commitment to complete high school is always worth it. "I always tell my students that education is freedom," Guno said. "At the end of the day, education is the best way they can get the life that they deserve."

▲ The Bolton Clan on Graduation Day

BladeRunners Gives At-risk Youth a Second Chance

In 18 cities across British Columbia, BladeRunners is helping at-risk youth pave their own way to a brighter, more prosperous future.

In 1994, when GM Place was being built in Vancouver, there was a critical shortage of skilled trades workers. Jim Green, a well-known advocate for disadvantaged youth and the homeless, and the founder of BladeRunners, realized that there was also a high percentage of street kids in need of jobs. He saw an opportunity for everyone involved and decided to match one need with another. "I heard a lot of criticism from people saying that it was too dangerous to put these kids on a construction site and that it wouldn't be successful. But these kids proved to be the best workers in BC," said Green.

Having just celebrated its 15th anniversary, BladeRunners has proven that these at-risk young people will succeed if given a chance. In fact, they'll do more than succeed; they'll thrive. "We're looking for accomplishment, not just labourers," said Kim Maust, Vice President of Bastion Development Corporation, who regularly hires workers from BladeRunners.

URBAN ABORIGINAL STRATEGY

A community-based initiative developed by the Government of Canada to improve the social and economic opportunities of Aboriginal peoples living in urban centers. Through the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, all levels of government work with Aboriginal community members and organizations to increase the participation of urban Aboriginal people in the economy, in the priority areas of improving life skills; job training, skills and entrepreneurship; and support for Aboriginal women, children and families. For more information, visit www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/ofi/uas/bkg-eng.asp

"We're looking for individuals who will contribute to the success of the project and that's what BladeRunners delivers: accomplishment and success."

AWARD-WINNING SUPPORT

BladeRunners' success is premised on providing more than just jobs – it also offers ongoing support and guidance to participants.

The coordinators start by looking at the person as a whole – what their strengths are, what issues they're facing and what challenges they may have to overcome in order to be a good employee. Since problems for at-risk youth typically happen after the work day ends, BladeRunners developed an award-winning system of 24/7 support.

Provincially, BladeRunners has a 66 per cent Aboriginal participation rate and a job-placement rate of 88 per cent, higher in some cities – indicating that the program is clearly working. Darcy McDiarmid, Director of BladeRunners, believes it's important that the program attract a high number of Aboriginal young people. "We'd like to see as many Aboriginal people benefit from this program as possible," said McDiarmid. "And we do that by providing different levels of support. We offer cultural support by bringing in spiritual leaders who come and talk about how to use spiritual identity and culture to be successful."

"BladeRunners gave me a second chance at life," said a previous BladeRunners participant. "There was a time when things were pretty rough, but they always believed in me and took the time to help me. They helped me out with some legal matters and helped pay my moving costs when I moved into Vancouver. Now I'm a Lead Hand on several major construction projects around the city."

THE SKY'S THE LIMIT

The program has attracted attention from more than just industry. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, through its Urban Aboriginal Strategy, provides financial support, and the Province of BC and local governments support the program on an ongoing basis.

BladeRunner's positive track record is now being recognized across Canada, in cities like Calgary and Toronto, and even internationally. The Mayor of New Orleans has been in contact with program staff to voice support and interest in starting a similar program in that city.

For many, BladeRunners has opened the door to jobs and communities. It has helped others start their own companies. "BladeRunners participants help build communities. They not only contribute to the economic well-being of BC cities, but also help change the sky lines," said McDiarmid.

WHERE TO FIND A BLADERUNNERS NEAR YOU

The BladeRunners program operates throughout the province, in:

- Duncan
- Nanaimo
- Chemainus
- Victoria
- Mount Currie
- Pemberton
- Whistler
- Prince George
- Nanaimo
- Ladysmith
- Courtenay
- Comox
- Port Alberni
- Tofino
- Ucluelet
- Qualicum
- Chilliwack
- Surrey

For more information on BladeRunners, visit www.bladerunners.info

Modern Treaties

Towards a Brighter Future.

▲ Nisga'a Lisims Government in session

Reconciling the Past, Shaping the Future

In May 2000, Nisga'a Nation Chief Dr. Joseph Gosnell stood in Gitwinksihlkw (pronounced GIT-win-silk), a village in the beautiful Nass Valley of northwestern British Columbia, and made an historic speech celebrating the new Nisga'a treaty, the first modern treaty to be signed in BC. "Under the treaty," he said, "we will be allowed to make our own mistakes, to savour our own victories, to stand on our own feet once again."

For the first time in modern history, the Nisga'a people had the legal authority to take care of their own affairs. With the passing of this treaty into law, the Nisga'a Nation became the first self-governing First Nation in Canada – with the power to make laws on such important matters as healthcare, education, social services, land and resources, economic development, environmental stewardship and culture and heritage. What's more, these rights set out in the treaty were protected under the Constitution of Canada.

Today, the official website of the Nisga'a Nation's main governing body, the democratically elected Nisga'a Lisims Government, is so full of high notes that it practically sings. "Together with our partners across British Columbia and Canada, we're busy making history – and building a bright, sustainable future," reads the home page.

Today, many other First Nations in British Columbia are busy negotiating their own treaties with the federal and provincial governments. In October 2007, Chief Kim Baird of the Tsawwassen (pronounced tah-WASS-en) First Nation

addressed the BC Legislature on what would become Canada's first urban treaty. "The Tsawwassen treaty, clause by clause, emphasizes self-reliance, personal responsibility and modern education. It allows us to pursue meaningful employment from the resources of our own territory for our own people," she said. The Tsawwassen treaty came into effect on April 3, 2009.

At the same time, a group of five First Nations on nearby Vancouver Island was finalizing negotiations on their own treaty. In June 2009, Parliament approved the Maa-nulth treaty which brought these First Nations together under the umbrella of one agreement. The Maa-nulth treaty provides for five distinct self-governing Maa-nulth First Nations, and like the Tsawwassen treaty, emphasizes principles of autonomy and self-reliance. For many of the Maa-nulth, like Toquaht Nation former Hereditary Chief Bert Mack, it marked the culmination of lives dedicated to the long journey toward recognition and reconciliation for their communities. At the age of 18, Mack's own father had entrusted him not only with the chieftainship and

▲ Chief Kim Baird of the Tsawwassen First Nation at Effective Date Ceremony

the leadership of their community, but also with his quest for a treaty, a task his son proudly completed some 67 years later.

Treaty negotiations are a cornerstone of the federal government's approach to reconciliation with Aboriginal people in BC, and hopes are high that more treaties will be completed in the coming years. Modern, comprehensive treaties provide First Nations the authority to once again make decisions about their own lives and their own future.

HISTORY'S LEGACY

After all, Aboriginal peoples in North America were taking care of their own affairs long before Europeans first arrived on the scene. Canada's history as a nation is comparatively brief, spanning less than 150 years.

When early Europeans first began to settle in the eastern part of North America in the 1500s, Britain recognized that the people already living on the land had certain claims to it. This was recognized by the Royal Proclamation of 1763.

▲ Dr. Joseph Gosnell in Gitwinkshlkw

When Canada was formed in 1867, major treaties were being signed as settlement moved west across the country, but west of the Rockies things played out differently. The result is that today there are few historic treaties in BC, leaving most of the province subject to outstanding Aboriginal claims.

Since 1973, 22 modern treaties have been negotiated across Canada. Fifty-nine First Nations – representing about two-thirds of all Aboriginal people in BC – are currently participating in the BC treaty process.

The 1800s set the stage for what would become known – over a century later – as one of the most challenging public policy questions in Canadian history. How do you reconcile the legitimate, but sometimes conflicting interests of First Nations, BC and Canada?

Modern treaties are demonstrating that, while by no means easy, reconciliation is possible.

THE MODERN TREATY PROCESS: TRIUMPHS AND CHALLENGES

Several Supreme Court of Canada decisions have affected change for Aboriginal rights. These changes are reflected in modern treaties, which acknowledge the legitimacy of First Nation's culture and traditions and even some traditional forms of Aboriginal governance. For instance, the Maa-nulth treaty recognizes that the Maa-nulth First Nations may wish to provide in their constitutions for the appointment of hereditary chiefs into their governance structures. The challenge is to reconcile these centuries-old customs with modern institutions.

Today's treaties also recognize the diversity of First Nations – that there isn't

▲ Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Celebration

a one-size-fits-all approach for the 198 First Nations in BC. Treaties negotiated in urban centres, for instance, may be quite different than treaties negotiated in rural or remote environments. Understandably, First Nations from the province's remote regions are more likely to focus on issues of land and resource development than First Nations in more densely populated or urban areas, who will negotiate on other priorities.

Successful outcomes like the Nisga'a, Tsawwassen, and Maa-nulth treaties are hard-won victories. During treaty negotiations, representatives from the First Nation and the federal and provincial governments come to the table to examine issues that are important to all Canadians: healthcare, jobs, housing, access to education and health care, programs and services. Solutions have to work for all sides, negotiations are often lengthy, and, predictably, compromises have to be made.

Negotiators soon learn that success relies on reconciling diverse interests in treaty provisions that everybody can live with. That kind of give and take may not be easy, but experience shows it can be done—and that the time, energy and commitment are well worth it. The Nisga'a, Tsawwassen and Maa-nulth First Nations worked hard and long for their treaties. But a whole generation of young Aboriginal people can now close the door on a past of uncertainty—and focus instead on a brighter future.

For more information on treaty making in BC, visit: www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/al/hts/index-eng.asp or www.bctreaty.net

Tsawwassen

Woliwon
(Maliseet)

Kuk'chem
(Shuswap)

Medu
(Tahltan)

T'oyaxsut 'nüün
(Tsimshian)

Meegwech
(Ojibwe)

Giaxsixa
(Heiltsuk)

Kuks-chum
(Nlaka'pamux)

'Toyaxsii'niisim!
(Gitxsan)

Hi Hi
(Cree)

Kleco
(Nuu-chah-nulth)

Thank You
(English)

Ona
(Mohawk)

Emote
(Sliammon)

Giyanaca'ci
(Wuikinuxv)

Mussi
(Carrier)

Hay chxw q'u
(Salish)

' How'aa
(Haida)

Gilakas'la
(Kwakwala)

Hay ch q'a'
(Hul'q'umi'num')

Tabi Mussi
(Athapascan)

To the Aboriginal communities highlighted in this publication – Thank you for sharing your stories with us.

Contributors

Julie Anne Ames
Valerie Barrett
Anita Bedell
Helena Bryan
Alana Clement
Amanda Costa
Susan Cuthbert
Craig Hodge
Matthew Hurley
Leslie Pang
Miranda Post
Bernice Timmer